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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE AND THE PREPARATORY PROCESS

Public information programme and information coverage of the World Conference on Human Rights and its Preparatory Process

Introduction

1. It will be recalled that at the second session of the Preparatory Committee a report was submitted by the Secretary-General of the World Conference on Human Rights on the comprehensive programme of public information activities, information products and promotional activities to be undertaken by the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Centre for Human Rights (A/CONF.157/PC/17). The objective of these endeavours was to fulfil the decision of the Preparatory Committee, which was confirmed by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/116 of 17 December 1991, that the Secretary-General should give the World Conference and its preparatory process the widest possible publicity and ensure full coordination of public information activities in the area of human rights within the United Nations. The following is a report on the progress achieved by the Centre for Human Rights and by DPI in carrying out these decisions.

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I. CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

2. With a view to meeting the objectives established by the General Assembly, while enhancing the impact and effectiveness of its public information initiatives, the Centre for Human Rights has emphasized compatibility with and heightened publicity for the World Conference in all of its public information activities and, in particular, in the implementation of the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights. The major strategic communication aim, in cooperation with DPI, has been to maximize the exposure of the World Conference as an implicit or explicit aspect of the ongoing communications priorities that have been established for the Centre in recent years.

3. In this regard, the Centre for Human Rights has already placed particular emphasis on the aims and objectives of the World Conference on Human Rights in its measures to promote practical education and awareness in the field of human rights. Specific reference to the Conference has been a feature of regional and national training courses and workshops carried out under its advisory services and technical assistance programme. The World Conference has been highlighted in this way in the substantive and the related communications and public information dimensions of over 20 national, regional and international conferences, seminars, workshops and training courses that have been held in all regions of the world under the auspices of the programme of advisory services and technical assistance between January 1991 and August 1992. The special value of enhancing awareness of the Conference and its preparatory process in this manner was noted by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1992/38 of 28 February 1992.

4. In meetings throughout the world that have been attended by staff of the Centre for Human Rights, within the framework of the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights, measures to sensitize participants to the aims and objectives of the World Conference have been an important consideration for the representatives of the Secretariat.

5. In connection with other regular features and activities of the advisory services and technical assistance programme, the Centre for Human Rights indicated in the report to the second session of the Preparatory Committee, a number of specific information initiatives to be undertaken. The status of these activities is as follows.

6. Measures are being undertaken to bring forward the process required to award a human rights prize in the year of the World Conference. The award will be made to an individual or individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the international promotion and protection of human rights. The award will be made in accordance with the criteria and procedures established for this award and measures will be taken in conjunction with the World Conference to heighten the profile of the award.

7. Eighteen Fact Sheets have been published in the six official languages of the United Nations and these are distributed worldwide free of charge. Six additional Fact Sheets dealing with a number of key human rights topics of particular relevance to the World Conference are in preparation and are expected to be published prior to the World Conference.

8. Two special issues of the Bulletin of Human Rights are in preparation. One will be devoted to the subject of the World Conference on Human Rights and the other will be entitled Human Rights, Democracy and Development with articles on these themes by persons prominent in the field of human rights from all parts of the world.

9. A new version of the booklet Human Rights: Questions and Answers, especially focused on the World Conference, is currently in preparation and will be widely distributed when completed.

10. The impending issue of the Human Rights Newsletter will place special emphasis on the World Conference on Human Rights and subsequent editions will carry up-to-date information on the World Conference and its preparatory process.

11. Important efforts have been devoted to the elaboration of human rights teaching materials. The publication ABC Teaching Human Rights is being reprinted in response to growing demand from teachers' organizations, educational institutions and international organizations and within the framework of the World Conference a renewed endeavour will be made to continue to draw the attention of Member States to this booklet, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/99 of 14 December 1990.

12. In addition, the Centre for Human Rights is presently developing a manual on human rights teaching at university level, in cooperation with UNESCO. Extensive efforts have been devoted to this initiative. The Centre is also elaborating teaching manuals for different target groups and for specific human rights subjects. One manual that is in preparation deals with national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, while a series of manuals is being developed to meet the needs of persons involved in the administration of justice.

13. In the near future, the Centre will initiate a programme to disseminate more widely the Manual on Human Rights Reporting, which contains information for Governments on the fulfilment of the reporting obligations under six human rights instruments.

14. The Centre for Human Rights has, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information, been coordinating the translation and verification of regional and local language versions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A process of reviewing the translation project is now under way with a view to expanding the range of instruments translated and the number of language versions available, specifically focused on the three instruments that form the International Bill of Rights, identifying the language versions

that presently exist and those that must be located or commissioned. Close cooperation continues between the Centre for Human Rights and DPI to ensure widespread and effective dissemination of the different language versions of these basic instruments.

15. Concerning basic assistance to national focal points, the Centre for Human Rights is renewing its efforts to obtain from Governments in all regions and identification of national focal points to which basic assistance and documentation in the field of human rights can be provided. Information relating to the World Conference, along with other human rights information, would be routinely provided, as it now is to the national focal points that have been identified.

II. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

16. The Department of Public Information has worked closely with the Centre for Human Rights in the preparations for the World Conference and to promote the World Public Information Campaign on Human Rights. Because of the relationship of these two activities at this time, the Department is striving to meet the aims of both in its present programme of human rights-related activities.

17. As already reported to the second session of the Preparatory Committee, the Department has designed a public information programme for the World Conference to emphasize the purpose and objectives of the Conference and to enhance public awareness of major human rights issues. The programme reflects the equal importance and indivisibility of all categories of human rights, as well as the interrelationship between human rights and development in full respect of the Charter of the United Nations. The overall objectives of the information programme are to mobilize international public opinion in support of the United Nations efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to publicize the Conference and its results.

18. The Department's programme is aimed at focusing attention on the preparatory activities leading up to the Conference and on the key issues; helping to create an awareness of the significance of the Conference and of the United Nations in the field of human rights; highlighting some of the basic problems faced in different regions of the world; and publicizing United Nations declarations and international instruments.

19. Since the flame logo is so closely identified with United Nations action in the field of human rights, as well as the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights, it is being used on all public information products for the World Conference.

20. The Department has developed a signature campaign design for the Conference to be used in its various information products. Its public information programme is aimed mainly at the media, non-governmental organizations interested in human rights issues, educational institutions, government officials and concerned intergovernmental organizations.

21. The main elements of this programme are:

(a) An illustrated brochure to be published in September 1992 (six official languages);

(b) A multicolour poster, using the slogan "Keep the flame alive", to be produced in September 1992 (six official languages);

(c) A print public service announcement based on the poster to be produced and distributed in late 1992 (English);

(d) A press information kit to be produced in the fourth quarter of 1992 and distributed in time for Human Rights Day, 10 December 1992 (English, French and Spanish);

(e) A series of background notes to be issued periodically within the United Nations Focus series, six to eight of which will be included in the press kit (English, French and Spanish);

(f) Special coverage of the issues before the Conference to be printed in the UN Chronicle (six official languages), and in Development Forum (English, French and Spanish), beginning in the fourth quarter of 1992;

(g) A special edition of the publication Notes for Speakers to be produced in late 1992 for distribution in early 1993 (English, French and Spanish);

(h) Local information programmes to be carried out by selected United Nations information centres, including the organization at the national level of such activities as seminars, panel discussions, exhibits and the reproduction of information materials into local languages;

(i) Reprints of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the official languages of the United Nations and in selected local languages, as well as reprints of other international human rights instruments in 1992-1993;

(j) A series of special radio feature documentaries in the six official languages and other languages to be produced within the Perspectives series during the fourth quarter of 1992 for distribution beginning in January 1993;

(k) Four or more segments of the television programme UN in Action to be produced for use on the Cable News Network weekly programme World Report, which is seen in 90 countries. The Department will distribute these items in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish to additional broadcasters worldwide; and

(l) Two or more half-hour programmes in the television series World Chronicle to include interviews with leading personalities in the field of human rights.

22. The half-hour documentary film entitled "New Horizons for Human Rights" as well as the educational film and teaching guide on human rights, both produced last year, will be widely distributed in preparation for the Conference.

23. The Department has held informal consultations with United Nations agency representatives at Headquarters on inter-agency collaboration regarding the preparations for the World Conference and the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, including discussions on special events and activities. At the annual session of the Joint United Nations Information Committee, held in Rome from 7 to 9 July 1992, DPI presented proposals for joint public information projects, the sharing of audiovisual materials, more coverage of human rights issues by each agency in preparation for the Conference and/or funding of other activities. Several of these proposals are expected to be finalized later this year.

24. Further to the request of the second session of the Preparatory Committee, the Department is making arrangements for press and possibly radio coverage of the regional preparatory meetings scheduled for Bangkok, San José and Tunis. In addition to DPI coverage, it is hoped that the results of the third session of the Preparatory Committee and the Department's contacts with local, regional and international media will generate interest in media coverage of these regional meetings.

25. In keeping with its role at major United Nations conferences, the Department is making arrangements for its activities before and during the Conference. Prior to the Conference, preparations will include, inter alia: producing and disseminating pre-Conference public information materials; handling press inquiries and soliciting coverage; providing information to the media about accreditation for the Conference; planning for facilities and equipment at the Conference site, for both DPI staff and members of the working press; coordinating activities with members of the Joint United Nations Information Committee; providing coverage of United Nations international and regional preparatory meetings; and responding to requests for information from the media, non-governmental organizations and the public.

26. During the Conference, the Department's activities will include, inter alia: providing accreditation to members of the media wishing to cover the Conference; providing and supervising working areas for the audiovisual media; meeting press requests and inquiries, including the scheduling of interviews and photo shoots; running daily press briefings; distributing official documents and statements to the press; responding to requests by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the general public for information; providing press coverage (English and French) of the Conference plenary and its major committees as well as radio (English, French and Spanish) and television coverage; issuance of press releases, daily news, radio and television feeds through Vienna, New York and Geneva; issuing other press releases, as needed; arranging press conferences for delegations, United Nations officials and participating United Nations agencies; and liaising with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations officers. The decision is pending regarding the funding of German-language publications and press coverage at the Conference.

United Nations Information Service (UNIS), Geneva

27. Because the Centre for Human Rights is based in Geneva, the United Nations Information Service at Geneva has a special role in the Department's preparations for the World Conference. In addition to representing DPI at inter-agency meetings on the World Conference and other human rights issues in Geneva, the Information Service has been designated to represent the Department at the meetings of the Conference Management Committee, to be set up at the United Nations Office at Geneva, where the secretariat for the World Conference is located.

28. In addition to highlighting the work of the Preparatory Committee through press coverage, UNIS Geneva services more than 200 journalists accredited to the United Nations Office at Geneva, organizes briefings for non-governmental organizations and the media with the Secretary-General of the Conference and other Centre officials and arranges special DPI exhibits on human rights issues at the Palais des Nations, among other activities.